

something. . . . It is quite another thing to get up in front of your coworkers and tell them they should teach differently.

As facilitators guided teacher consultants through a process of writing their vignettes during two retreats, we found that even claiming an identity as a teacher leader seemed to carry an element of risk. When we introduced the idea of writing about leadership, many claimed that they were not leaders. Several defined leadership as "telling people what to do." Although some teachers readily identified themselves as leaders, none described their work as authoritarian or hierarchical, and many wrestled with how to portray their collaborative approach to leadership. When the group redefined leader-

ship as making a commitment to students, taking responsibility for contributing beyond one's own classroom, and working collaboratively, teachers showed greater comfort in claiming the mantle of leadership.

In describing their experiences, these teachers stressed that true teacher leaders demonstrate a strong moral commitment to doing what is right for children. Some teacher leaders show a passion for working toward social justice, which leads them to devise teaching strategies and build alliances that become the impetus for change. Elizabeth C. Davis, building on her lifelong work as a civil rights activist, engaged her middle school students in studying the history of their own

school, which introduced them to the landmark antisegregation case *Brown v. Board of Education*. Their investigations led to political activism that improved the condition of their own school and others in Washington, D.C. Davis explained,

I continue my activism as a teacher by modeling the power of writing and building alliances, as well as opening up opportunities for students to advocate for themselves. A part of my dream is to make my classroom a laboratory for equity and social justice.

Similarly, C. Lynn Jacobs advocated for her colleagues' chance to choose which curriculum they would use as professionals working toward what they considered ideal outcomes for their

## Ten Snapshots of Leadership

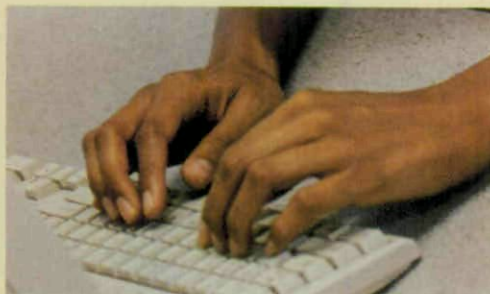
Each of these teachers participated in a summer institute of the National Writing Project and has remained an active part of the network. We highlight here the results of the leadership effort that each teacher wrote about in the vignette composed for our study.

### Building Capacity

In 2005–06, 4th grade teacher *Cecilia Carmack* served as a teacher on special assignment for her district one day a week, while continuing to teach in the classroom. At her Washington State elementary school, Carmack spurred development of a schoolwide writing assessment, engaged teachers in analyzing students' writing, and facilitated grade-level meetings at which teachers together identified possible approaches for teaching writing.

### Leadership for Social Action

*Elizabeth Davis*, a 32-year veteran teacher, engaged her District of Columbia middle school students in a series of social action projects. Students learned that their school had been part of one of the cases considered along with *Brown v. Board of Education*. They also successfully advo-



ated for their school building to be renovated rather than torn down.

### Fostering Teacher Collaboration

*Lynne R. Dorfman* works full time as a literacy coach/writing extension teacher in an intermediate school in Pennsylvania. Beginning in 2004, she took advantage of a

districtwide focus on literacy to spur all teachers and students to keep writers' notebooks. Dorfman facilitated weekly professional development with the entire faculty and invited other teachers to share their own and their students' writing.

### Learning from "Failed" Leadership

English teacher *Mimi Dyer's* narrative described her "failed" attempt at leading a Georgia high school's English department. In her first year as department head, she made three major curricular changes: incorporating more world literature, changing the approach to vocabulary instruction, and asking students to keep electronic portfolios of their writing. These decisions went against the pedagogical approaches of vocal members of her department, and



## Even as they fostered improvement in their schools, teacher leaders cultivated their own teaching practice.

students. Jacobs described leadership as taking a stand:

At the school site level, I was driven to stand up for my beliefs and in so doing became recognized as a leader. . . . What I think now is that leadership is about taking a stand and saying what we know.

The vignette writers emphasized that leadership must be earned. Many noted how they received recognition from colleagues for their commitment to chil-

dren, high-quality teaching, and willingness to share ideas with coworkers who turned to them for advice. After Paul Epstein facilitated a schoolwide benchmark-setting process, teachers from all grade levels sought him out informally for advice on how to teach writing. He wrote of the ripple effect his leadership had at his school:

Ruffner Elementary School began to see itself and be seen as a school that was strong in writing. Writing lined the hall-

ways throughout the building, interspersed with art. . . . [Now] teachers who are hesitant to teach writing are getting encouragement from those with more experience.

### The Primacy of Building Community

Some researchers advocate thinking about a school as a community of those who share values, sentiments, and beliefs (Sergiovanni, 1994). The teachers in our study shared this focus on relationships as an important means for improving teaching and learning, and they described how they worked collaboratively alongside colleagues.

### Addressing Problems Collectively

Leaders identify problems that can best be addressed through collective action

department members petitioned to have her replaced. Dyer used the experience to rethink her approach to leadership.

### Creating a Professional Learning Community

As a Title I reading specialist at an elementary school in West Virginia, Paul Epstein worked to improve the teaching of writing and raise student achievement on state writing exams, launched a quarterly student writing anthology, mentored other teachers, and started a professional learning community in which teachers read professional literature and turn to one another to strengthen their teaching.

### Advocating Teacher-Developed Curriculum

C. Lynn Jacobs has taught for 14 years. As her California high school's English Language Development department chair, Jacobs persuaded the district to continue using her department's teacher-developed curriculum rather than adopting the district's newly chosen textbook series wholesale.

### Crafting Challenge for Gifted Students

In 1987, Nancy King Mildrum saw that the brightest students in her 4th grade class were not being fully supported and challenged. She created an enrichment program at her 700-student, K-8 school in Vermont, a program that now employs four enrichment teachers.

### Ripple-Effective Leadership

Austen Reilley launched a single-gender education option in her Kentucky middle school. She began by creating an after-school girls' writing club. The club's success spurred her to research single-gender education and propose that her school pilot single-gender classes.

### Effecting Change Teacher to Teacher

Lucy Ware simultaneously taught her own 3rd grade class at her Pennsylvania elementary school, team taught reading and language arts in a 2nd grade classroom, and provided literacy instruction to 1st graders. She facilitated deep changes in the teaching of writing by coteaching, collaboratively developing teaching units, and highlighting the good work of her peers and their students. As Ware put it, "I give away everything—my process, ideas, and suggestions—and it is reciprocal."

### Rules Worth Breaking

Christine Wegmann served as a 7th grade social studies master teacher at her South Carolina middle school. She combined full-time classroom responsibilities with leading her department to integrate reading and writing into their social studies curriculum. Wegmann helped teachers defend the new literacy focus of their social studies curriculum from her district's call for return to a test-preparation focus.

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